VIII.

THE USE OF PREACHERS,

AND HOW TO OBTAIN MORE:

A

SERMON,

PREACHED TO THE GLEBE-ST. PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

OF CHARLESTON,

BY THE

REV. A. A. PORTER.

CHARLESTON:

BURGES, JAMES & PAXTON, PRINTERS.

1848.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

The following Sermon was preached in accordance with a Report and Resolution adopted by the Synod of South-Carolina, in October, 1847; from which we take this extract:

"The Committee to whom was referred the report of the Standing Committee on Education, beg leave to report—

"That after mature reflection, they can think of nothing calculated to appeal more eloquently to the minds and hearts of the members of Synod, and of the Christian community generally, than the fact, the startling, the deplorable fact, disclosed by the report of the Standing Committee.

"Your Committee on Education will commence their duties, the ensuing year, with an actual debt of $477. And what renders this fact the more distressing, is, that it has occurred notwithstanding the special effort to raise funds for this important object, ordered by the last Synod, and, for the most part, faithfully made by your Ministry.

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"2. *Resolved*, That to meet the present urgent necessities of our beneficiaries, the second Sabbath in January be observed as a day of special Prayer and Preaching with reference to this subject, and that it be enjoined upon all our Churches which have not previously attended to this duty, to take up collections for this object on that day, and forward them as above directed; and should it not be convenient to any Church to observe this Sabbath, then as early a day thereafter as possible be devoted to this matter."

"It need not be added, that the indebtedness of the Synodical Committee of Education continues and is increasing. There are a number of candidates for the Ministry dependant on this Committee, whose expenses must be met or their studies be interrupted. The Committee feel that they can do no otherwise than continue the measure of assistance which, in reliance on the contributions of the Church, they have pledged to these young men. None are aided unless they are candidates in good standing, under the care of some Presbytery, and are unable to sustain their own expenses while pursuing their studies. It is hoped that the Churches will come forward, with cheerfulness, to meet the call which is now made upon them, and that while they pray the Lord of the harvest to send forth more laborers into the harvest, they will not suffer those to want, whom, it is believed, he has already called, and who are striving to obtain the education which is required in those who are to be the teachers of others."

CHARLESTON, Feb. 15th, 1848.

At a meeting of the Corporation of the Glebe-Street Church, held this evening, the following Resolutions were unanimously adopted:

Believing the publication of the Sermon preached by our Pastor, the Rev. A. A. Porter, on Sunday morning, the 6th inst., will be of great benefit to the cause of Education in the bounds of our Synod,—

Resolved, That a Committee be appointed to request of him a copy thereof, for this purpose.

Resolved, That on receipt of the same, the Committee be instructed forthwith to publish it, and to place any proceeds arising from the sale of it, in the hands of the Ladies' Education Society of this Church.

SERMON.

And how shall they preach, except they be sent? ROM. x. 15.

BELIEVING the Bible, we must believe also in the following propositions, clearly delivered in its holy pages.

I. No human being can escape the wrath to come, and obtain eternal life, except through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. John iii. 36. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." Acts iv. 12. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Rom. x. 13, 14. "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?"

II. In order to this faith, *the doctrine* of Christ must be made known to men. Rom. x. 14. "And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?" Rom. x. 17. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

III. Sinners are not only converted and saved, but Christians, and the whole body of Christ's Church

grow in grace, perfect holiness, and are made meet for the heavenly inheritance, by the same indispensable means—knowledge of, and faith in the doctrines of the Gospel. I. Pet. ii. 2. "As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." II. Pet. i. 2. "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you *through the knowledge* of God, and of Jesus our Lord, according as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness, *through the knowledge* of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue."

IV. The chief and most important agency appointed by the great Head of the Church, to communicate this knowledge to men, is the labor of living *Preachers* of the Gospel. Other instrumentalities may be useful and important, but the grand institution of the Lord Christ, for the salvation of men, is the ministry of the everlasting word. I. Cor. i. 21. "It pleased God, *by the foolishness of preaching*, to save them that believe." Rom. x. 14. "How shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without *a Preacher?*"

Our blessed Master himself, consecrated the office, and proclaimed its prime importance, by the high example of His own life, spent in the laborious preaching of the truth.

His parting commission to the Church, with divine authority, establishes this means of saving the world. "Go ye into all the world and *preach the Gospel* to every creature."

'His royal gifts bestowed upon the Church amid the triumphs of His ascension,' were "Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers; for the perfect-

ing of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." Eph. iv. 11, 12.

The Church for which he died, is gathered, preserved, and extended by this agency. All the measures and means He has ever taken to save men, rely on the ministry of preaching and instruction, as the instrument of their success. Every important advance ever made on the kingdom of Satan may be traced and referred, directly or indirectly, to this God-appointed instrumentality.

Deprive the Church of her ministry now, and with one generation she would be buried in the dust. Take away her Preachers from the world, and you rob the world of its Gospel, its Saviour and its God. The unbelieving and ungodly understand not this; but we speak to those hearts of faith and love, which, taught of God, believe in Him and rejoice in Christ Jesus.

The Preachers of Christ claim no glory for themselves. They are but *instruments* in His hand for the salvation of men, and the servants of servants. Oftentimes are they the feeblest and most unworthy of men; "for God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen,—that no flesh should glory in His presence,—that, according as it is written, he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

"Earthen vessels" are selected to convey this "treasure" to men, "that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." But while the vessel is mean and worthless, whosoever despises it, despises thereby the treasure of eternal life and salvation.

Let the Church, then, understand the importance of her Preachers. Let her know that she has been born

and brought up by them; that she lives and grows by them; that she *cannot do without them.* Let her hear that word by the Apostle, that believers "are God's husbandry, God's building," while in their culture and building up, ministers "are laborers together with God." I. Cor. iii. 9. Let her run her eye back along her history for near six thousand years, and looking upon that unbroken succession of holy Prophets, Apostles and Preachers, who from age to age have been the means of her conversion and continuance, let her bless the God who gave them for her salvation. When she forgets the value of her ministry; when she forgets that, under God, she owes all her heavenly hopes, all her precious faith, all her divine consolations; the holy word of truth which guides her, the knowledge and understanding which enlighten her, and her very existence itself,—when she forgets that for all these she is indebted to her ministry as the means—may the eye of her angry God look upon the wounds of her great High Priest, and have mercy upon her.

V. The Lord Christ, Head and King of the Church, and He alone, can furnish it with Pastors and Teachers. All the institutions of His kingdom are under the dispensation of His own sovereign good pleasure. The ministerial function requires, in the first place, the regeneration of the soul, and the inward life of faith and power. This grace is altogether dependent on Christ. "He quickeneth whom he will."

In the second place, there must be a special divine call to this particular office. We reject utterly the idea that any pious man, who chooses to serve God in this way, is authorised to do so, without a special call and commission from the the divine Master of the

Church, revealed in the man's own conscience and heart by the Spirit of God—Luke x. 1. "*The Lord appointed* other seventy also, and *sent them.*"—v. 2. "Pray ye the Lord of the harvest, *that He would send forth* laborers into His harvest."—Acts xiii. 2. "*The Holy Ghost said*, separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto *I have called them.*"—Gal. i. 1. "Paul, an Apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father." None then but the divine Master Himself can call, prepare, and send forth laborers into His harvest. "How shall they preach except they be sent?"

VI. Nevertheless, as in all the matters of His kingdom, so in this, He is pleased to make the calling and sending of Preachers to depend on the use of means by the Church. He has united His own sovereignty and power with human agency and effort. We discuss not the manner of this connection. *The fact* is indubitable. He requires us to confess and to feel our dependence on Him, as a fundamental and glorious truth. But He will not suffer us to deny the necessity and advantage of our own activity.

Thus the success of His kingdom in this world is to be referred ultimately to His own grace and power; but it is connected also with the self-denying, prayerful, persevering efforts of the Church. The conversion of a soul, its preservation in the faith, and final glory, are the work of the Lord Jesus; but they are also inseparable from the use of means and personal activity and effort.

We are not to suppose therefore, that while the Lord Christ alone can call and send Ministers, the Church itself has nothing to do, in order to the

bestowment of this blessing. As it is her duty to labor for the conversion of souls to God, though it is not in her power to change the heart of a single sinner,—so is it her duty, by wise and lawful means, to seek a supply of holy, devoted, faithful, Christ-sent Preachers.

Our Church therefore, while it bears an unwavering testimony to the necessity of a call to this work, direct from the glorious King of Zion Himself, confesses also its own duty and responsibility, and at this time calls upon you who love and honor the name of Jesus, to unite in using the means sanctioned by Scripture, and blessed in experience, to furnish a dying world with the ministry of salvation.

If we have a heart to hear this exhortation, then are we ready to inquire what those means are. I will mention *three*.

1st. *Prayer*,—earnest, importunate, believing Prayer.

This is an express injunction of the Lord Christ Himself. "The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few. *Pray ye* therefore the Lord of the harvest that He would send forth laborers into His harvest." He gave this command just as He was sending His chosen disciples to preach the Gospel of His kingdom. His soul yearned over a world lying in its sin; the spiritual desolations of its perishing multitudes wakened all the compassion of His gracious heart, and He called for the sympathy and co-operation of His disciples. He could on the instant have called and sent by miraculous power, myriads of faithful messengers to preach the glad tidings of salvation; but according to the law and economy of His kingdom, *He could not* without the prayers of the Church. He

therefore calls upon the Church to fulfil this condition of his mercy. "*Pray* ye the Lord of the harvest, that He would send forth laborers into His harvest."

By all the value she sets on her Ministry then, by all her love for Jesus, and by all her zeal for His glory in the salvation of men, is she pressed to faithful, importunate supplication unto her Lord for this gift of His abounding grace.

Slumbering Church! hear the love-spoken word which the voice of your Jesus-God would resound through all your borders, and into every heedless heart! "*Pray ye!*" And for what? For your own holiness and salvation? What! And is a Christian man all selfishness like others? For your own families and friends? And do you not know the heart of his Saviour better than that? Did He die for *them* only? Pray for whom then? For a world rolling its guilty millions into the gulf of perdition? Yes! pray *for the world.* But how? what shall you ask for them? "Pray the Lord of the harvest *that He would send forth laborers* into His harvest." Pray for the increase and enlargement of that divinely ordained agency, by which alone that world can be saved, and brought back to God and glory.

And, my brethren, experience enforces the encouragement given to our prayers in these words. We have it in the recent history of our own Church. In the year 1841, it was found that for some time previously, the number of candidates for the ministry had been decreasing. A day of special prayer in reference to this fact, was appointed for the whole Church, and the very next year furnished the grateful proof that a prayer-hearing Christ is not unfaithful to His promise: there was a large increase. Precisely the same thing

occurred in 1846–7. The holy ones of Zion gathered round the mercy seat of a gracious Saviour, and lifted up their united prayers that He would have mercy on His Church, and send forth laborers for its salvation. And the Lord heard it, and was pleased, and gave them their desire. Let us therefore, be encouraged this day, to call upon Him in faith, nothing doubting that what He has promised, He is able also to perform.

Is it indeed true, that our unworthy and feeble cry, wafted on the wing of faith, can ascend even to heaven, reach the heart of a gracious God, and return laden with a gift of mercy which shall bring salvation to the souls of men!—Oh, thou wonderful God! *Why do we not pray then?* Why is it that from every sanctuary, from every family altar, from every closet, from every believing, loving heart, holy, incessant, earnest prayers do not go up, like clouds of incense, to the Throne of Eternal Grace!

Church of the glorified Jesus, charged with the salvation of a world! not to pray for more help—what is it, but a proud, vain-glorious declaration that you are able to save that world without it?—or an impious confession that the world may go down to perdition, and you care not if it does!

2d. Another means to be used in order to an increased number of Preachers, is:

Parental consecration of children to Christ in the service of the ministry, with believing prayer for the acceptance of the offering, and faithful use of such education and discipline as shall prepare the child for the work. Parents impress themselves upon their child, on his body and on his soul. In a great measure, they may make him what he is to be for good, or for evil, for

time and for eternity. They may do this by their sinful unfaithfulness and negligence, to their own sorrow and his destruction. And they may do it by faith and prayer and godly training, for their eternal joy and his salvation. God has put the character and destiny of the child, to a great extent, in the power of the parent, that he may be brought up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." He uses the sacred relations and institution of *the family* as a means to further the ends of His kingdom, and makes it the nursery of His Church. His covenant with Abraham was, "in thee and in thy seed, shall all the families of the earth be blessed." His promise in the New Testament is, "the promise is to you and to your children."

The Christian's child belongs to God as a creature of His power. It is the offspring of one who belongs to God by the two-fold right of creation and redemption. It has been dedicated to Christ in the holy vows and ordinance of baptism. Why should it not be yielded up to His glory, in the office and work of the ministry?

We have scriptural example to authorize parental dedication of an infant child to the service of the sanctuary. The holy mother of Samuel having received her child from the hand of God by prayer and faith, gave him back unto the Lord all the days of his life. Her heart, purified and inspired by the love of God, triumphed over the yearnings of nature, and consecrated her only son to the ministry of the altar and of the temple. Thus was Samuel numbered among the Prophets and Princes of Israel, and a mother's faith illustrated in its prevalence and power.

In all ages, in every land, many of the best and brightest preachers have been the gifts of parental

piety, offered up unto God in early infancy, with strong crying and tears. We need but mention Augustine, Edwards, Doddridge, Newton, Payson, Davies, to remind you of the grace and blessing God gives to parental faithfulness and prayer.

And when, my brethren, did the Presbyterian Church have faithful Pastors in all her congregations, and many beside to send as Evangelists to the waste places of the earth? It was in the days of which our fathers have told us; when every household, if it had so many, desired to give one son to the work of the ministry, and esteemed it a joy and an honor thus to glorify their God; when even the poorest family, in tears and faith and love, set apart *one*,—and always the brightest, and most beautiful, and best beloved, as a sacrifice to Jesus and His Church; when father, and mother, and brothers, and sisters lived, and toiled, and prayed at home, to support and educate the one they had torn from their hearts and given to God.

Then no Church died out, for want of a Pastor. Then, foremost of all, Presbyterian ministers were found carrying the light of the Gospel into distant lands, and gathering the elect of God from the four corners of the earth.

And *now*, careful inquiry proves that a large proportion of those whom the Lord calls into this work, were set apart and devoted to the ministry, by godly fathers, or by tearful, humble, Christ-loving, Mary mothers, who followed their vows with their prayers, and their prayers with a pious and rigid education and discipline.

Ye fathers and mothers therefore, who say that you glorify Jesus; who profess that you are His, and have given Him your hearts,—have you no *son* to bestow upon him? Do you love Christ better than you love

the world, better than yourselves, better than all, and will you not lend your child unto the Lord all the days of his life? You call yourselves the friends of a crucified Saviour. Behold Him, bathed in blood, broken-hearted, dying for your salvation! He desires some one whom He can send to tell the world that He has died for it. He looks upon your boy and then at you. There is a question, a wish in His loving eye. Father! mother! sinner, bought with his life-blood, and saved by grace—what do you say? Shall Jesus, *your own Jesus*, have your child, or not? Will you rather give him to pride, to ambition, to mammon, to the world, *to Hell?* Blood-bought sinner! heaven-born, heaven-bound sinner! *take him to Jesus!* There, at the cross, in faith and love, devote him to your Saviour, with a whole, a happy, a thankful heart, and then go, in prayer and faithfulness, to bring him up for the service of your Lord.

3d. Another means to be used by the Church, in order to obtain a supply of Preachers, is:

The contribution of pecuniary aid to those who need it, in preparing for the ministry.

It is plain from Scripture that it is not the Lord's will to call and send men to this work, without giving them previous training and instruction for its arduous duties. We cannot expect Him miraculously to qualify any man for it. It is His law and order to fulfil His will *by means.* Even the holy Apostles were for three years under His own personal teaching and training. And it is a touching and interesting fact that the Lord and His disciples were supported in great part, during this time, by a little band of holy women from Galilee, who followed Him, and "ministered to Him

of their substance." Here was virtually a "Female Education Society,"—the favored first of the Christian Church. Let their names be had in everlasting remembrance!

It is also a fact, that about one-half of those whom Christ calls into this office, at the present time, in our Church, must either be thus assisted in their preparation, or be condemned to delay and difficulty and painful toil in the best years of life. Not many rich, not many noble are called. The divine Master selects, for the most part, those who are inured to self-denial, privation and labor—men who have learned to surrender ease to necessity, to sacrifice pleasure to duty, to subdue self-will to obedience. It is so *now*. He has called some from the homes of humility and daily toil, and in answer to her prayers, sent them to the Church's door, and bade them say "here are we, send us." They have nothing else to give the divine Jesus, nothing more to bestow on the Church they love, and they give their lives—*themselves*.

They come not as beggars, asking alms. They come to render service.

They come not to claim a charity. They come to bestow a blessing.

They have voluntarily sacrificed for the Church their time and labor, and their power to gain an independent subsistence for themselves. Some of them, with talent and energy, relinquish a sure prospect of worldly opulence and honor. All and any of them, possessed as they are of piety and principle, need no hand of charity to feed them. But with hearts strong in faith and fervent with holy love for the Lord Christ and His Church, they present themselves before her, offering to sacrifice every earthly prospect, and to de-

vote time, talents, body, soul, life, *all*, to Jesus and that Church. They ask of her nothing but the means wherewith to serve her.

They are no humble suppliants for the crumbs of her charity. They come to give much, to receive little. They bring life and salvation, they take but food and raiment. They bind themselves for life, body and soul, to the service of the Church. They only ask out of her abundance, enough to keep body and soul decently together.

Thus have I shown you, my brethren, that the ministry of the word is the great appointed means for the conversion of sinners, for perpetuating the Church, for the perfecting of the saints, and for the glory of Christ. I have also laid before you the fact that the use of means by the Church has an important connection with an increase of the number of ministers; and in particular, that many called to this work need our help in their preparation for it. Now, therefore, I claim for this purpose, the sympathy and co-operation of every Christian man. In the face of these facts, can he refuse them, and still presume to call upon the name of Jesus?

The object we are charged to lay before you, appeals to you, my brethren, as you love the souls of men, as you believe in eternal heaven and everlasting hell.

It appeals to you as you love yourselves, and desire to increase in all grace and godliness. It appeals to that sighing heart which every Christian man carries in his bosom, breathing and panting and crying after the love of God and the joys of His salvation. It appeals to *the Christ* which is in him—by his love of the divine Saviour—for the glory of His kingdom and the honor of His royal crown. Friends of the glori-

fied Redeemer, to *you* we speak. We ask nothing for these sons of the Prophets. We name not the name of man. We plead not for a brother in distress. Jesus asks it—for Himself. We want it for the souls of men. We plead for the dear Church, cherished, and beloved, and blessed by every Christian heart. Where is the man calling himself a Christian, who does not love it? who will not give, and labor, and deny himself, and suffer for it? The blood of Jesus, his heart's Lord and glory, is on that Church—would he not *die* for it?

Well! and will he not to-day *give* for it, of his prayers and of his substance?

Before he answers, or decides "how much?" let him go to Calvary, and look his Saviour in the face. If he shrink from that, let him remember he *must* meet that Saviour, face to face, not on the cross of agony, but on the throne of judgment; and, with an assembled world to hear it, have it told and published *how much it was* he gave to-day. Let him give, then, as he hopes to stand unabashed in that dreadful hour.